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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 000116

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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/PASCUAL/RAMCHAND

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TAGS: [ECON](#) [EAID](#) [IS](#) [KWBG](#) [MOPS](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#)
SUBJECT: GAZAN CONTACTS MAKE GOOD USE OF "HUMANITARIAN
PAUSES" WHILE OVERALL CONDITIONS REMAIN GRIM

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (SBU) Summary. Gaza contacts reported that the daily "humanitarian pauses" in the fighting allow them to take care of household chores and stock up on supplies, but do not mean a complete cessation of IDF attacks. Some contacts and USG partners reported severe damage to their homes from IDF strikes. While some noted minor improvements in the humanitarian situation over the past 48 hours, including more food on the shelves, all contacts remarked that life in Gaza remains abysmal, especially for the displaced, as most resources remain scarce and the medical system is unable to deal with the mounting casualty toll. End Summary.

PAUSES IN FIGHTING ARE "LIKE MAGIC"
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12. (C) American Corner Gaza Director Awni Karzon told PDoff that the daily "humanitarian pauses" allow Gazans to purchase necessities, visit with relatives, and take stock of their lives. Karzon was able to return to his partially-damaged apartment to retrieve canned foods and baby formula. On the way, he saw people lining up to siphon water from a tank into half-gallon cans.

13. (C) The breaks in the fighting are "like magic," according to Karzon. Many take the opportunity to do basic household chores. Al-Azhar professor Nehaya El-Telbani told PDoff that she likes to go up on the roof of her home and wash her family's clothes during the lulls, because it is too dangerous to do so during the hours of combat. Amideast Gaza Director Anees Abu Hashem told PDoff that, during the January 11 lull in the fighting, he picked up medicine for his pregnant wife from an UNRWA clinic.

14. (C) Contacts noted that there has not been a complete cessation of IDF attacks during the "pauses." Abu Hashem told PDoff that an IAF drone fired two missiles at a building just a block away during the January 11 "humanitarian pause."

USG CONTACTS REPORT DAMAGE TO THEIR HOMES
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15. (C) Faysal Abu Shahla, Fatah PLC member and director of an NGO hospital in western Gaza City, told Poloff on January 12 that his house was severely damaged overnight by an airstrike on the former home of Muhammad Dahlan. The blast shattered glass windows and doors and knocked out electricity in the house, but did not injure anyone in the family, Abu Shahla said. They remain in the house and are buying plastic tarps to cover damaged areas.

16. (C) USAID subcontractor Bassam Naser told USAID FSN that his Gaza City home was severely damaged by IDF shelling. Four children injured in the attack were given first aid by Naser's wife, a pharmacist at Shifa Hospital, before being rushed away in ambulances. All of the windows in Naser's

house were destroyed and much of his furniture was damaged. Since they have nowhere else to go, they will stay in the apartment. During the next break in the fighting, Naser intends to find plastic sheeting for the windows.

MORE FOOD, BUT PRICES STILL HIGH
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¶17. (C) While food is still scarce, Karzon reported that there is much more available in the markets than at any point in the last two weeks. "It felt like Eid today," he said, adding that he bought tomatoes, carrots, cabbage, potatoes, canned food, and even four chickens. Prices remain high; a kilo of tomatoes has risen from 2 shekels to 5 shekels (USD 1.25), while chicken has risen from 9 to 15 shekels (USD 3.75) per kilo, and flour from 60 to 150 shekels (USD 37.50) per 50-kilogram bag.

¶18. (C) Many Gazans cannot purchase goods because they have no cash. Fadi El-Hindi, the director of a local Gazan NGO and former USG exchange grantee, told PDOff that banks ran out of currency weeks ago. Eid Sulayman Abdullah, mayor of al-Qarara near Khan Yunis, told Poloff that banks are closed, and joked that, "even if you have half a million dollars, you can't get at it. The poor man and the rich man are equals now."

SITUATION REMAINS GRIM
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¶19. (C) Former USAID subcontractor Rana Abu Shaban told USAID FSN that she and her disabled father and young son in Gaza City have been without electricity, food, and drinking water

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for three days. She said she cannot find supplies during the breaks in the fighting, because she does not live close to shops or water distribution points and does not want to leave her family alone.

¶10. (C) American Corner Director Karzon said that his neighbor, an ambulance driver, had seen many dead bodies trapped under the rubble of buildings and a street dog eating human remains. USAID subcontractor Naser said that his wife had seen doctors at Shifa hospital conducting operations in the hospital corridors due to a lack of surgery rooms. Al-Azhar professor Telbani said that doctors she knows report casualties with skin "baked" by what they claimed was white phosphorus, and other cases of patients whose insides had been liquefied.

¶11. (C) The situation for the displaced in UNRWA shelters remains particularly bad, according to contacts. Eman al-Bayyouk, a youth NGO director and former USG exchange grantee, told PDOff that each family in UNRWA shelters in Khan Yunis receives a small quantity of bread and tuna each day. Parents moisten the bread with milk to feed their babies in the absence of formula. Bayyouk works with the traumatized, displaced children, many of whom, she said, wake every night screaming in fear that the "planes are coming again to bomb them."

WALLES